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OBSERVATIONS OF TWO LINES OF SASQUATCH TRACKS IN OREGON

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INTRODUCTION

In November, 1986, the author spent several days examining, measuring, making plaster casts, and photographing presumed Sasquatch (Bigfoot) tracks. The location was in the Clackamas River drainage of the Cascade Range in northwest Oregon. Earlier fieldwork has appeared in this journal previously (James A. Hewkin, 1986, Investigating Sasquatch Evidence in the Pacific Northwest, *Cryptozoology*, Vol. 5: 27–37).

The tracks were reported by a boy who took a crude plaster cast (21 inches) of a presumed Sasquatch print to Jack Sullivan, who then relayed the information to me. Sullivan investigated Sasquatch reports with me in this general area in 1976–77, and we were interested in an opportunity to investigate new evidence.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

On November 12, 1986, Jack Sullivan and I visited a site in the Cascade Range foothills where a boy showed us numerous presumed Sasquatch tracks. Upon close scrutiny, it was evident there were two trails of tracks, both indicating widely spread, flexible toe action.

At the outset, I was skeptical of the validity of the prints, mainly because of their close proximity to human habitation and activity. The two trails of tracks started abruptly and ended abruptly. The tracks began about 300 yards from the family cabin where the boy lives with his parents and 3 brothers. They were logging the timber off a 1,700 acre tract, and considerable equipment was on the premises. The chassis of an old school bus and a large truck loaded with cord wood were in close proximity to the tracks. The grounds adjacent to the cabin are occupied by a menagerie of animals, including several chained dogs, some goats, chickens, ducks, geese, and a horse.

The most prominent feature of this mountainous foothill vicinity is vast tracts of second growth Douglas fir interspersed with woodland farms. The elevation is about 2,300 feet; however, within a few miles, the elevation exceeds 4,000 feet. It is rugged terrain dissected with numerous logging roads, and logging activity is in progress year-round.

In conversation with the boy and his father, it was learned that considerable disturbance had been going on among the farm animals for several nights prior to the discovery of the tracks. The chained dogs reportedly acted

TABLE 1.—Lengths of measurable strides in two lines of presumed Sasquatch tracks found in the Clackamas River Drainage of N.W. Oregon Cascade Range, November 7, 1986.

Upper track line strides (inches)	Terrain	Remarks	Lower track line strides (inches)	Terrain	Remarks
46	Level	Started in potato patch	79	Uphill	Start on old mossy
—	Level	Scuff mark	42	Uphill	wood road
—	Level	Scuff mark	72	Uphill	
—	Level	Scuff mark	50	Uphill	
43	Level		50	Uphill	
46	Level		56	Uphill	
54	Level		52	Uphill	
45	Level		54	Uphill	
50	Level		50	Level	
45	Level		62	Level	
48	Level		85	Level	
69	Level		62	Level	
105	Downhill	Extended over debris	85	Level	
36	Downhill		52	Level	
53	Downhill		56	Level	
—	Downhill		50	Easy downhill	
—	Downhill		48	Easy downhill	
—	Downhill		42	Easy downhill	
—	Downhill		40	Easy downhill	
43	Downhill		43	Easy downhill	
36	Level		45	Easy downhill	
40	Level		52	Easy downhill	
28	Level	Stopped beside tree	55	Easy downhill	
44	Level		80	Easy downhill	Stepped over down-
46	Level		30	Steeper	fall
42	Level		—	Steeper	
45	Level		45	Steeper	
			45	Steeper	
			—	Steeper	Scuff
			—	Steeper	Scuff
			57	Steeper	
Average stride is 48 inches.			Average stride is 55 inches.		

very disturbed, and they barked furiously for long periods. One evening, the father fired a shot in the air with a high-powered rifle to quiet the dogs and to frighten off anyone who might be trying to pilfer equipment. The tracks were encountered by the oldest boy, who was checking the property on the morning of November 7, 1986, following considerable disturbance by the barking dogs during the night.

Our investigation of the tracks indicated the presumed animal had skidded in some of its strides, which tended to exaggerate the true size of the foot-

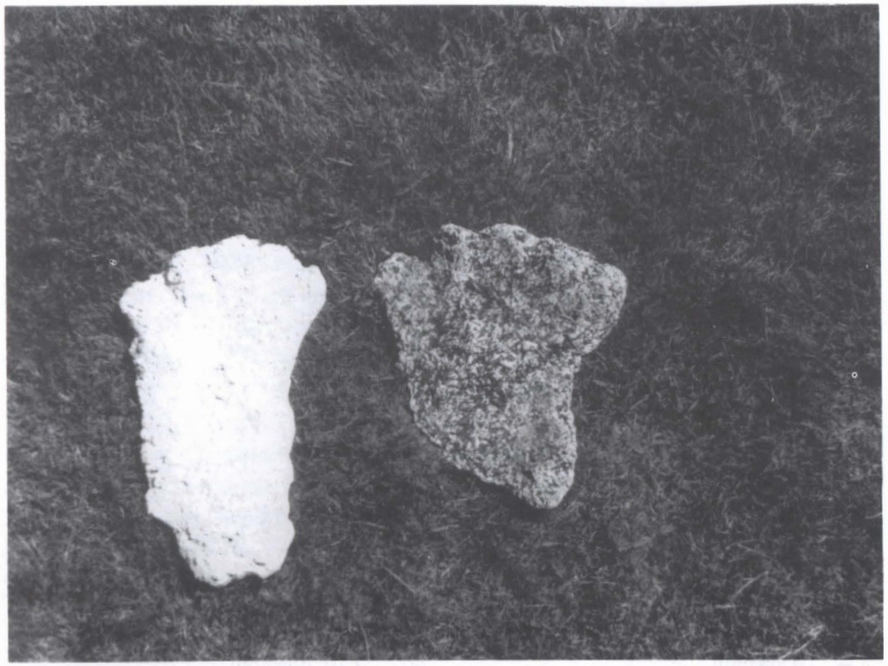

FIG. 1.—Two casts of right foot tracks. Note the similar size of 1st and 5th digits. The cast on right has a 12-inch toe spread, and the heel did not mark. The cast on left has a 9-inch toe spread, and has weight distribution on the entire foot—it is a copy of original cast Grover Krantz used for dermatoglyphic study.

prints. The skid marks created footprints up to 24 inches in length, but the true size of the prints was determined to be about 16 inches. There were two lines of tracks, traveling away from the direction of the cabin, approximately 50 yards apart.

The upper line of tracks started from a potato patch, with no discernible tracks (just scuff marks in the potato patch, in which two small diggings were evident), and traveled about 50 yards, turning to the right, moving uphill, and vanishing at the edge of heavy brush. The lower line of tracks started from a moss-covered wood road, and traveled downhill, making nearly a U-turn back to the wood road, then vanishing.

All measurable prints were examined in both lines of tracks (Table 1). The average stride of twenty prints measured in the upper line was 48 inches. The average stride of twenty-eight prints measured in the lower line was 55 inches. Both lines of tracks exhibited flexible toe spread, and had similar heel and width-of-foot characteristics, leading me to propose that both lines of tracks were made by the same individual animal.

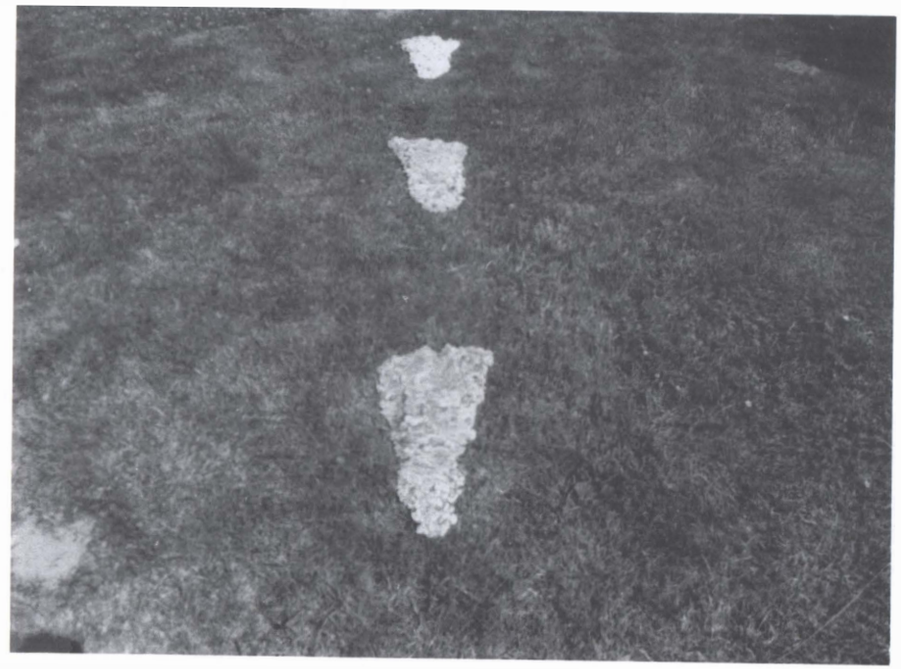

FIG. 2.—Three tracks cast in sequence, showing right, left, and right footprints from bottom to top. Note the lateral extension of 1st digit in the middle and upper print.

The strides ranged from 28 inches to 105 inches in the upper line of tracks. The lower line strides ranged from 30 inches to 85 inches. The skid tracks, which were noted in both lines of tracks, were attributed to saturated ground conditions resulting from heavy rains which had drenched the area during that period. It was noted that the first digit of the foot was sometimes extended laterally to a considerable degree.

Considerable variation in toe spread and toe positioning indicated the animal had a very flexible foot. The widest toe spread (12 inches) was exhibited in a right footprint in which the heel did not mark, although there was a detectable smoothness of the ground litter where the heel had lightly touched down (Fig. 1). This was the only print that displayed all the weight distribution on the forepart of the foot. Toe spread width ranged from 9 inches to 12 inches. Heel width was 4 inches to 5 inches.

In general, the prints revealed widely spread toes, with an acute lateral extension of the first digit, and heavy distribution of weight in the fore part (Figs. 2, 3, and 4). However, a few showed a human-like toe position.

In places where ground litter was deeper, the toes pushed up—or lifted out—considerable material ahead of the print as the foot was raised for the

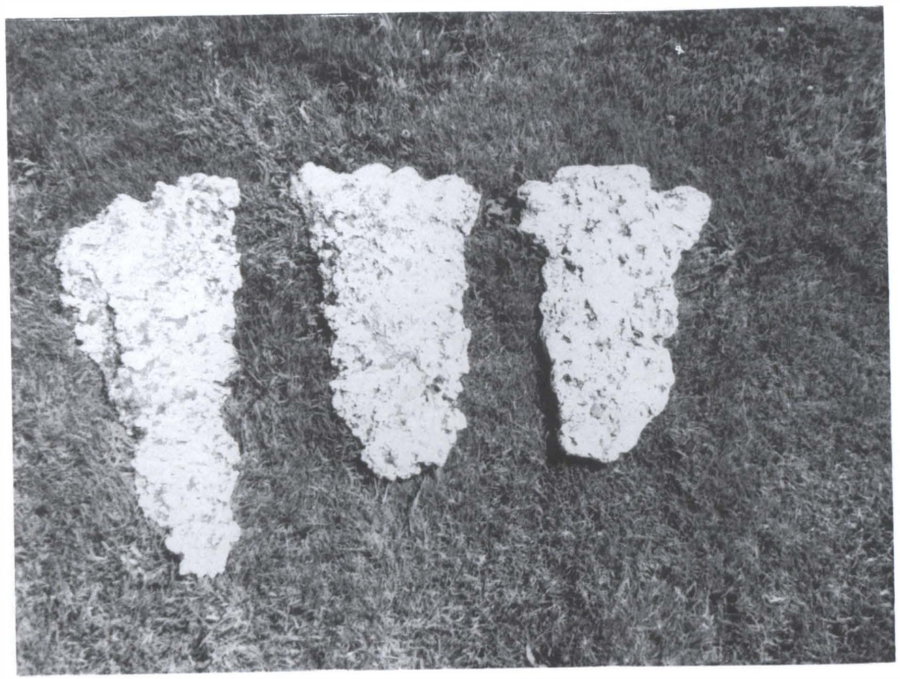

FIG. 3.—The same casts as shown in Fig. 2, with a better view of the variation in movement of the 1st digit.

next step. Around the edge of the entire print, litter and soil were squeezed up one or two inches. The shortest measured pace was 28 inches, where the animal apparently stopped beside a tree. One could speculate that, under the circumstances, this was logical behavior, since a tree trunk would tend to conceal its presence.

RESULTS

Several casts of footprints were subsequently examined by Grover Krantz, at Washington State University, who selected one for dermatoglyphic study (Grover S. Krantz, 1983, Anatomy and Dermatoglyphics of Three Sasquatch Footprints, *Cryptozoology,* Vol. 2: 53–81). Some dermatoglyphs were present, and cast copies were made (left cast in Fig. 1).

I am not an expert on the anatomy of the foot, so will not elaborate on the subject. However, there are variations in the positioning of digits one and five to a degree that, to my knowledge, has not been recorded in previous casts of presumed Sasquatch tracks.

Susan Cachel has questioned Krantz's identification of the Elk Wallow (Walla Walla) prints as hominid by virtue of the marked adduction of digit

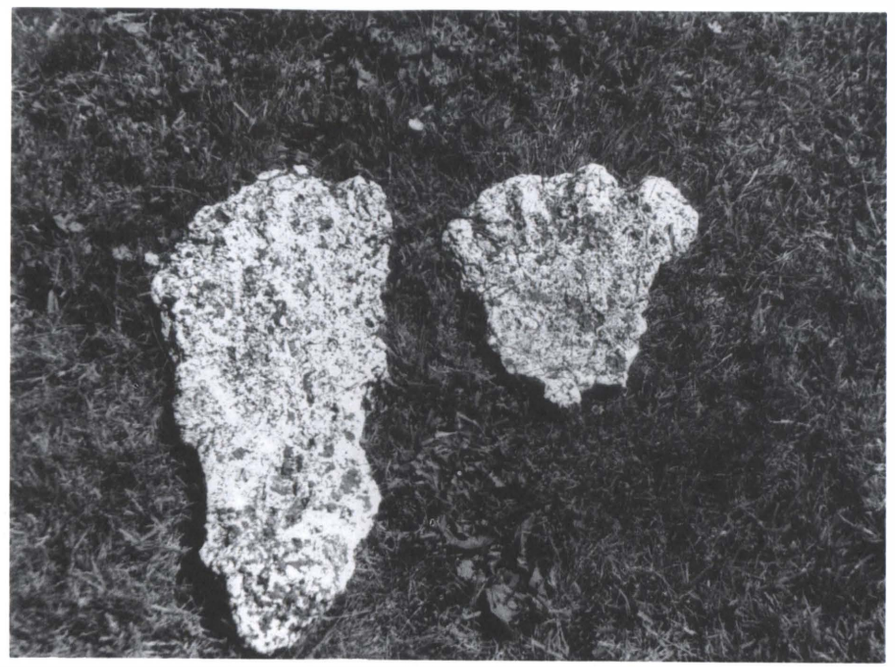

FIG. 4.—Another view of the right foot, indicating variable toe positioning. The heel is not shown on the print on the right due to a shortage of plaster when casting.

one (Susan Cachel, 1985, Sole Pads and Dermatoglyphics of the Elk Wallow Footprints, *Cryptozoology,* Vol. 5: 45–54). These prints suggest they were made by a bipedal animal with a very flexible foot, presumably adapted to cope with the rugged terrain of the Pacific Northwest. Possibly some of the digits of the foot could be used for grasping, and the foot would have a thick sole pad for protection. Such flexibility would certainly enable such an animal to more easily scale perpendicular cliffs, as is reported occasionally.

My impression of the animal's behavior at the track site was as follows (which, I confess, is pure speculation): It did not *have* to leave tracks, but was irritated by the noise and confusion of the farm animals, so it plunked its feet around in a "fit of temper." It returned the same night, or the next, and repeated the display. The recent logging of several acres of timber may have had an impact on its foraging activity, and added more aggravation. This might explain why the tracks abruptly started and abruptly ended. I feel confident that Sasquatch seldom leave tracks to be looked at.

It seems to me, the tracks involved in this case study clearly represent an animal that is capable of abundant physical diversity. It can walk lightly on its toes when the occasion arises, or it can take long easy strides heel to toe.

It can slow down when in skid action by spreading the toes, and, likewise, it can use individual toe flexibility for dexterity in climbing steep terrain and scaling mountainous areas.

The animal evidently has a super muscular arrangement to enable its gigantic body to perform with speed and strength. This can only be accomplished by means of enormous muscles attached to stout ankle and leg bones, robust thighs to further aid in stride agility and maneuverability, and a very massive pelvic-lumbar area for muscle attachment and lower back strength.

I think it would be precarious to make comparisons with known primates in an attempt to classify this unknown animal. It appears to have physical properties and capabilities unlike any known animal.

Future Plans

The author plans to continue searching in the State of Oregon, and possibly elsewhere, for quantitative data that will shed more light on Sasquatch behavior. Needless to say, absence of good behavioral data is not an easy start.